

FEBRUARY 24, 1976

AMERICAN SCHOLARS ON LEBANESE REFORMS  
(TAPE INSERTS IN LIBRARY)

ANNCR:

THE SYRIAN-DACKED CHANGES IN LEBANON'S POLITICAL SYSTEM ARE LESS THAN TWO WEEKS OLD, BUT ANALYSTS OF THE SITUATION IN BEIRUT ARE ALREADY NOTICING CRACKS IN THE FACADE OF THE COUNTRY'S NEW POLITICAL FRAMEWORK. THE NEW GUIDELINES ARE DESIGNED BASICALLY TO ACKNOWLEDGE MOSLEM NUMERICAL SUPERIORITY IN THE POPULATION, AND TO BRING ABOUT A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE FACTIONAL WARFARE IN LEBANON. THEY MAINTAIN PAST RELIGIOUS CRITERIA FOR FILLING TOP GOVERNMENT POSTS -- BUT GIVE MOSLEMS AN EQUAL SHARE OF THE SEATS IN PARLIAMENT, TAKING AWAY THE CHRISTIAN MAJORITY. VOA'S JOHN LENNON REVIEWED THE NEW GUIDELINES AND DISCUSSED THEIR IMPLICATIONS WITH SEVERAL SPECIALISTS IN LEBANESE AFFAIRS.

NARR:

AMERICAN SCHOLARS GENERALLY BELIEVE THE REFORM PACKAGE TO BE A GOOD SHORT-TERM SOLUTION FOR LEBANON'S PROBLEMS. BUT THEY SAY THAT THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL FRAMEWORK MIGHT EVENTUALLY COLLAPSE IF IT IS NOT BUTTRESSED BY MORE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES.

DOCTOR MICHAEL SULEYMANI, A LONG-TIME STUDENT OF LEBANESE AFFAIRS AND A PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AT KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY, SAYS THE REFORMS ARE, IN HIS WORDS, THE MINIMUM NECESSARY TO BRING A RETURN OF PEACE AND SECURITY. DOCTOR SULEYMAN SAYS HE DOES NOT BELIEVE THERE HAS BEEN A REDUCTION OF CHRISTIAN STRENGTH AS A RESULT OF THE MOSLEM GAINS -- AND SAYS THE AGREEMENT HAS BROUGHT ABOUT A MORE EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC WEALTH AMONG BOTH

MOSLEMS AND CHRISTIANS. ASKED ABOUT SYRIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN NEGOTIATING THE AGREEMENT, DOCTOR SULEYMAN SAID IT SHOULD NOT BE VIEWED WITH ALARM, AS FOREIGN INTERVENTION HAS BEEN A REGULAR OCCURENCE IN LEBANON FOR YEARS.

TAPE: SULEYMAN --CUT NUMBER ONE -- :34

"THE LEBANESE THEMSELVES HAVE IN THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS OPENLY DISCUSSED WHO RULES LEBANON -- IN TERMS OF FOREIGN INFLUENCE, IN TERMS OF FOREIGN COUNTRIES. SO, THE FACT THAT SYRIA NOW HAS A LITTLE BIT MORE INFLUENCE DOESN'T MEAN THAT THIS IS SOMETHING NEW. SYRIA HAS ALWAYS HAD SOME INTEREST IN LEBANON. ALL THAT HAS HAPPENED NOW IS THAT SYRIAN INFLUENCE IS GREATER, SAY, THAN EGYPTIAN INFLUENCE -- AND TO SOME EXTENT, PERHAPS, EVEN GREATER THAN AMERICAN INFLUENCE."

NARR:

OTHER EXPERTS QUESTIONED GENERALLY AGREE THAT SYRIA'S INITIATIVE IN MEDIATING THE LEBANESE DISPUTE WAS MOTIVATED BY A DESIRE TO NEUTRALIZE A POSSIBLE THREAT TO ITS OWN SECURITY. BUT FORDHAM UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR JOHN ENTILES BELIEVES THAT SYRIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN LEBANON COULD CAUSE CONSIDERABLE HARM. THE POTENTIAL IS THERE, SAYS DOCTOR ENTILES, FOR VASTLY INCREASED INVOLVEMENT BY LEBANON IN THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE. AND HE ADDS THAT SYRIAN INFLUENCE IN BEIRUT PUTS OFF AN ANSWER TO THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION OF WHAT CONSTITUTES LEBANESE NATIONHOOD -- AND, IN HIS VIEW, THROWS INTO SOME DOUBT THE POLITICAL LEGITIMACY OF THE STATE.

THE QUESTION OF A LEGITIMATE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT IN LEBANON IS A TOPIC OF CONCERN FOR DOCTOR MALCOM KERR, DEAN OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA IN LOS ANGELES. DOCTOR KERR SAYS THE POWER OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN BEIRUT NEEDS TO BE MORE FIRMLY ESTABLISHED.

TAPE: KERR -- CUT NUMBER TWO -- :25

"WE NEED TO HAVE MORE WEIGHT AND SUBSTANCE DEVELOPED BY THE STATE IN LEBANON, AND WE NEED TO HAVE MORE NATIONAL AUTHORITY. THAT AUTHORITY NEEDS TO BE BUILT AROUND A MORE HIGHLY DEVELOPED ADMINISTRATION. I DON'T MEAN JUST ADDING BODIES TO THE BUREAUCRACY, BUT SOMEHOW, NATIONAL AUTHORITY HAS TO BE MORE EFFECTIVELY INSTITUTIONALIZED IN LEBANON."

NARR:

CONCERNING THE REFORM PACKAGE ANNOUNCED THIS MONTH, PROFESSOR KERR -- BORN AND REARED IN BEIRUT -- CALLED IT MORE A GESTURE FOR THE PUBLIC THAN AN EFFECTIVE PIECE OF POLITICAL ENGINEERING.

ACROSS THE COUNTRY IN WASHINGTON, D.C., SIMILAR SENTIMENTS WERE VOICED AT GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY BY PROFESSOR MICHAEL HUDSON, A WIDELY RESPECTED EXPERT ON LEBANESE AFFAIRS. DOCTOR HUDSON SAYS THAT WHILE THE REFORM PACKAGE BUYS TIME FOR LEBANESE LEADERS TO PUT THEIR HOUSE IN ORDER, IT DOES NOT ADDRESS THE BASIC GRIEVANCES WHICH HAVE LED TO THE CURRENT CRISIS. NOTING THAT THE REFORMS PERPETUATE THE PROPORTIONAL DIVISION OF GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP POSTS AMONG RELIGIOUS GROUPS, DOCTOR HUDSON QUESTIONED:

TAPE: HUDSON -- CUT NUMBER THREE -- :37

"IS THE CONFSSIONAL, PROPORTIONAL SYSTEM REALLY APPROPRIATE FOR A COUNTRY THAT HAS BEEN UNDERGOING SUCH MASSIVE INTERNAL SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGES? IN THE LONG RUN, IT SEEMS TO ME YOU'VE GOT TO BE LOOKING TOWARD THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SYSTEM THAT IS BASICALLY SECULAR, AND ONE THAT DOES AWAY WITH THE SECTARIAN LOGIC THAT HAS BEEN THE KIND OF UNDERPINNING OF THE LEBANESE STATE SINCE IT WAS CREATED."

NARR:

CALLING THE LEBANESE AGREEMENT MORE A REDISTRIBUTION OF POWER THAN A PACKAGE OF REFORMS, PROFESSOR ILIYA HARIK (EE-LEE'-AH HA-REEK') OF INDIANA UNIVERSITY SAYS RESTORATION OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT CONTROL OVER THE COUNTRYSIDE WILL BE A

MAJOR AND DIFFICULT PROBLEM. NOTING THAT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY ARE CONTROLLED BY PALESTINIANS, DOCTOR HARIK -- A NATIVE OF LEBANON -- SAYS THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM LIES AT THE ROOT OF THE LEBANESE CRISIS.

TAPE: HARIK -- CUT NUMBER FOUR -- :33

"WE CANNOT HOPE FOR COMPLETE ORDER AND PEACE AND NORMALCY IN LEBANON AND PERHAPS IN THE REGION UNTIL THE PALESTINIANS HAVE A NATIONAL HOME OR SOME KIND OF SOLUTION THAT IS SATISFACTORY TO THEM. AS LONG AS THEIR PROBLEM IS NOT RESOLVED IN A REASONABLE WAY, WE CANNOT EXPECT TO HAVE NORMALCY IN LEBANON OR IN THE REGION."

NARR:

PROFESSOR ILIYA HARIK OF INDIANA UNIVERSITY. DESPITE THE GENERAL SKEPTICISM OVER THE LONG-RANGE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE LEBANESE REFORMS, DOCTOR MALCOLM KERR OF U-C-L-A ECHOED THE HOPES OF MANY OF HIS COLLEAGUES AS HE CONCLUDED HIS OWN REVIEW OF THE SITUATION IN LEBANON.

TAPE: KERR -- CUT NUMBER FIVE -- :32

"WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, I THINK IT WOULD BE A TRAGEDY FOR THE ARAB WORLD AS A WHOLE, IT WOULD BE A TRAGEDY FOR LEBANESE OF ALL RELIGIONS, IT WOULD BE A TRAGEDY FOR THIS COUNTRY (THE UNITED STATES) IF LEBANON AS A KIND OF HAVEN OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT OF PERSONS INTERNATIONALLY -- IF THAT WAS TO BE WASHED AWAY. I MEAN, IT'S JUST TOO VALUABLE AN INTERNATIONAL ASSET TO BE THROWN LIGHTLY AWAY. I REALLY HAVE MY FINGERS CROSSED THAT THESE COMPROMISES SOMEHOW WILL ENABLE THE COUNTRY TO PATCH ITSELF BACK TOGETHER."

NARR:

THE VIEWS OF U-C-L-A PROFESSOR MALCOM KERR -- ALONG WITH THE OPINIONS OF OTHER AMERICAN SCHOLARS ON LEBANESE AFFAIRS.

GH/PBM